Amendments to the Specification:

     After the title, please add:

     "This application is a national phase of PCT application PCT/JP2004/011324 filed July 30, 2004, claiming priority based on Japanese Patent Application No. 2003-205211 filed on July 31, 2003; Japanese Patent Application No. 2003-300656 filed on August 25, 2003; Japanese Patent Application No. 2003-332305 filed on September 24, 2003; and Japanese Patent Application No. 2003-394816 filed on November 25, 2003, the contents of which are incorporated by reference in their entirety."

     Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 5, line 17, through page 6, line 4, with the following rewritten paragraph:

(Equation 2)
$$IL_\Delta(dB) = -10log\left\{exp\left[-(d/w)^2\right]\right\}$$

[0016]
     wherein ~~ω~~ w is a radius of mode field of the optical fiber. This equation can be developed into the following equation.

[0017]
(Equation 3)
$$IL_\Delta(dB) = 4.34(d/w)^2$$

[0018]
     Here, if suppose ~~ω~~ w = 4.7 µm, the insertion loss IL_Δ (dB) due to the misalignment d between optical fibers is approximately 0.05 dB with the misalignment d of 0.5 µm, approximately 0.20 dB with the misalignment d of 1 µm, approximately 0.79 dB with the misalignment d of 2 µm, respectively. Accordingly, as the misalignment between the optical fibers is larger, a change of the connection loss is further increased.

Please replace the equation on page 7, line 7, with the following rewritten equation:

$$IL_\theta(dB) = -10log\{exp[-(\pi n\theta w/\lambda)^2]\}$$

Please replace the equation on page 7, line 16, with the following rewritten equation:

$$IL_\theta(dB) = 91.4(\theta w/\lambda)^2$$

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 24, line 16, through line 29, with the following rewritten paragraph:

Here, as shown in Fig. 3B, an inner surface of an opposite portion 5b to a slit 5a of the split sleeve 5 constitutes a positioning reference point for the ferrules 1 and 1'. The ferrule 1' with a larger diameter is likely to be displaced toward the slit 5a. Defining the center of the total axial misalignment with respect to the center O_1 of the outer surface of the smaller ferrule 1 as O_4, and the center of the total axial misalignment with respect to the center O_1' of the outer surface of the larger ferrule 1' as ~~O_4~~ $\underline{O_4}$', displacement corresponding to a distance d_s between O_1 and O_1' may be directed to the slit 5a. Here, the distance d_s between O_1 and O_1' means a half value of difference in diameter between the larger ferrule 1' and the smaller ferrule 1.